Maryland

Document A – The Intolerant Act of Toleration (1649)

Lord Baltimore, who had founded Maryland as a refuge for Catholics in 1634, pursued a policy of religious toleration from the outset. But the influx of hostile Protestants, combined with the success of the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War, prompted him to protect his Catholic co-religionists. He appointed a Protestant governor, and urged the Maryland Assembly to pass “An Act Concerning Religion”, which he had drafted back home in England. Protestants joined with Catholics in passing it.

That whatsoever person or persons within this Province… shall from henceforth blaspheme God, that is, curse him; or deny our Saviour Jesus Christ to be the son of God; or shall deny the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or [shall deny] the Godhead of any of the said three Persons of the Trinity, or the unity of the Godhead; or shall use or utter any reproachful speeches, words, or language concerning the said Holy Trinity, or any of the said three Persons thereof, shall be punished with death and confiscation or forfeiture of all his or her lands and goods to the Lord Proprietary and his heirs. …

Be it therefore also…enacted… that no person or persons whatsoever within this Province… professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth be in any ways troubled, molested, or discountenanced for… his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof… nor any way compelled to the belief or exercise of any other religion against his or her consent, so as they be not unfaithful to the Lord Proprietary, or [do not] molest or conspire against the civil government established or to be established, in this Province, under him or his heirs.

1. To what extent did the act establish religious freedom in Maryland? What would have happened to all Jews and atheists, for example, if the law had been strictly enforced?

2. What does Document A reveal about life in the Southern colonies?

Document B – A Contract for Indentured Servitude (1635)

Indentured servitude took many forms, and many different types of contracts survive from the colonial era. This is a blank contract from 1635.

The forme of binding a servant.

This indenture made the _____ day of _____ in the _____ year of the Sovereign Lord King Charles, &c. between _______ of the one party, and _______ on the other party … doth hereby covenant promise, and grant, to and with the said _______ his Executors and Assignees, to serve him from the day of the date hereof, until his first and next arrival in Maryland; and after for and during the term of _____ years, in such service and employment, as he the said _______ or his assignees shall there employ him, according to the custom of the Country in the like kind. In consideration whereof, the said _______ doth promise and grant, to and with the said _______ to pay for his passing, and to find him with Meat, Drink, Apparel and Lodging, with other necessities during the said term; and at the end of the said term, to give him one whole year’s provision of Corn, and fifty acres of Land, according to the order of the country….

Sealed and delivered in the presence of ______________________. H
3. What are the principal agreements made by the two parties signing this contract? How might this contract be abused by either party?

4. What does Document B reveal about life in the Southern colonies?

Virginia

Document C – Governor William Berkeley Reports (1671)

The foundation stones of British mercantilism in America were the Navigation Acts. They decreed that all commerce with the colonies had to be carried on in English-built and English-owned ships (a blow at Dutch competitors), and that certain “enumerated articles”, including sugar, tobacco, and indigo, could be exported only to England. To the English mainland colonies, tobacco was by far the most important enumerated product, and Virginia was especially hard hit. The Virginians, to be sure, were guaranteed a monopoly of the English market, but they were denied the profits of direct sales to Spanish and other European customers. As early as 1671 the testy Governor Berkeley of Virginia lodged a bitter protest with London officials in response to specific questions from them.

What obstructions do you find to the improvement of the trade and navigation of the plantations within your government?

Answer. Mighty and destructive, by that severe act of Parliament which excludes us the having any commerce with any nation in Europe but our own, so that we cannot add to our plantation any commodity that grows out of it, as olive trees, cotton, or vines. Besides this, we cannot procure any skillful men for one now hopeful commodity, silk; for it is not lawful for us to carry a pipe stave [wooden pipes], or a barrel of corn, to any place in Europe out of the King’s dominions. If this were for His Majesty’s service or the good of his subjects, we should not repine, whatever our sufferings are for it; but on my soul is it the contrary for both. And this is the cause why no small or great vessels are built here; for we are most obedient to all laws, whilst the New England men break through, and men trade to any place that their interest lead them.

What advantages or improvement do you observe that may be gained to your trade or navigation?

Answer. None, unless we had liberty to transport our pipe staves, timber, and corn to other places besides the King’s dominions.

5. According to Governor Berkeley, how did mercantilist restrictions hamper the development of Virginia?

6. What does Document C reveal about life in the Southern colonies?

Document D – The Baconite Grievances (1677)

Angry former indentured servants, impoverished and resentful, crowded into the untamed Virginia backcountry as the seventeenth century wore on. Governor William Berkeley’s unwillingness to protect the hardscrabble planters on the frontier against Indian butcheries gave rise to ugly rumors of graft [corruption] and helped spark a rebellion led by his wife’s kinsman, the well-born Nathaniel
Bacon. Following Bacon’s ill-starred rebellion, tobacco culture continued to flourish, including the use of African slaves. After the uprising had collapsed, a royal commission sent out from England prepared the following report, which was not friendly to Berkeley.

The unsatisfied people, finding themselves still liable to the Indian cruelties, and the cries of their wives and children growing grievous and intolerable to them, gave out in speeches that they were resolved to plant tobacco rather than pay the tax for maintaining of forts … and that it was merely a design of the grandees [coastal noblemen] to engross [monopolize] all their tobacco into their own hands.

Thus the sense of this oppression and the dread of a common approaching calamity made the giddy-headed multitude mad, and precipitated among them that rash overture of running out upon the Indians themselves … Only they first by petition humbly craved leave or commission to be led by any commander or commanders as the Governor should please … But instead of granting this petition, the Governor by proclamation, under great penalty, forbade the like petitioning for the future.

This made the people jealous that the Governor for the lucre of the beaver and otter trade, etc., with the Indians, rather sought to protect the Indians than them, since after public proclamation prohibiting all trade with the Indians (they complain), he privately gave commission to some of his friends to truck with them…

The rout [mob] being got together now wanted nor waited for nothing but one to head and lead them out on their design. It so happened that one Nathaniel Bacon, Jr., a person whose lost and desperate fortunes had thrown him into that part of the world about fourteen months before…, framed him fit for such a purpose….

7. What were the governor’s alleged shortcomings? In your opinion, did they justify Bacon’s defiance of his authority? Why or why not?

8. What does Document D reveal about life in the Southern colonies?

South Carolina

Document E – A Missionary Denounces the Treatment of the Indians in South Carolina (1708)

Francis Le Jau served as an Anglican missionary in South Carolina from 1706 to 1717. In his regular reports to his superiors in London, he described Indian-white relations in the southern colony and was especially critical of the Indian slave trade.

…. I perceive daily more and more that our manner of giving Liberty to some very idle and dissolute Men to go and Trade in the Indian Settlements 600 or 800 Miles from us where they commit many Enormities & Injustices is a great Obstruction to our best designs. I have tried to get some free Indians to live with me and would Clothe them but they will not consent to it, nor part with their Children though they lead miserable poor lives. It is reported by some of our Inhabitants lately gone on Indian Trading that they excite them to make War amongst themselves to get Slaves which they give for our European Goods. I fear it is but too true and that the Slaves we have for necessary Service, (for our white Servants in a Months time prove good for nothing at all) are the price of great many Sins…
The Indian traders have always Discouraged me by raising a world of Difficulties when I proposed any thing to them relating to the Conversion of the Indians. It appears they do not care to have Clergymen so near them who doubtless would never approve those perpetual wars they promote amongst the Indians for the only reason of making slaves to pay for their trading goods; and what slaves! poor women and children, for the men taken prisoners are burnt most barbarously. I am Informed It was done So this Last year & the women and children were brought amongst us to be sold.

9. What does Le Jau see as the principal harm inflicted on American Indians by white colonists? In what ways did their treatment of the native peoples complicate his efforts to spread Christianity among them?

10. What does Document E reveal about life in the Southern colonies?